



Starbucks' bait and switch

Full disclosure: I hate Starbucks' coffee. I feel confident that I'd hate it if you told me it was from Bluebottle and gave it to me in a ceramic mug, but I really hate it in a paper cup (and, incidentally, I dislike paper cups first for aesthetic reasons, and only then because they're totally and absurdly wasteful).



Joe Raedle / Getty Images

Which brings me, more or less, to the point of this post: Why doesn't Starbucks (a) make "for-here" mugs more readily available, and (b) have recycle and compost bins in its stores? This isn't even Green 101, it's green for middle schoolers.

And yet the company's execs somehow managed to dupe shareholders into voting down a resolution that would have encouraged these measures because, they said, they already have a CSR program in place. (Resolutions can only ask executives to look in to policy changes, not to make them.)

The resolution, put forward by As You Sow, failed at the company's March general meeting after the board told shareholders that it was redundant with the company's "Shared Planet" program. But the resolution was quite clearly an effort to give Shared Planet some much-needed teeth.

Starbucks sells 3 billion paper cups a year in the United States, each of which is made of 10 percent recycled material. It has promised to make the cups recyclable by 2015 and to have recycling bins available in "100 percent of our stores where we control the waste" by the same year. Why they think it will take five years to do what kindergartners around the world already do every day, I can't say.

Despite the company's claims that it has a sustainability plan in force, that plan does not include any efforts to streamline packaging or introduce recycled content in its plastic Ethos water bottles or its glass Frappucino bottles. These failures earned it the second-lowest score among all bottlers in a [2008 As You Sow report card](#). Nor, most importantly, does the company make any commitments to ensuring that its containers actually get recycled. The resolution asked for movement on both.

Sadly, Starbucks pulled the unsustainably produced wool over its shareholders eyes. I can only wonder if it tastes as lousy as its coffee.

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